

STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT
CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER FOR THE VACCINATED
& EXTENSION OF SET AND BEST CASH GRANTS

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MINISTER OF FINANCE AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE
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CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER FOR THE VACCINATED

Madam Speaker, in March, 2020 after the first case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in Jamaica, this Government moved swiftly to build a programme to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and that of the necessary measures to combat the pandemic. The Government, through a multi-agency team, led by the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service developed from scratch the CARE programme which brought economic and social support to approximately five hundred thousand (~500,000) Jamaicans.

On December 31, 2020, the World Health Organization announced the first vaccine for use under the Emergency Use Listing. This marked a seminal shift in the global fight against the pandemic. Subsequent approvals for other vaccines followed relatively quickly. This was the first time in recorded history that vaccines had been developed and approved within such a short time span and, consequently, has had varying reactions across the world's populace. Governments including here in Jamaica have prioritized senior citizens as the devastating effect that COVID-19 has on that group has been recognized.

Madam Speaker, the COVID pandemic has had a disproportionately fatal impact on person's aged 60 and over. Figures from the Ministry of Health show that:

75% of those who have died from COVID-19 are from among the group aged 60 and over. There were 974 deaths from COVID-19 up to June 5th of which 733 were persons aged 60 and over

Whereas only 0.6% of the persons under 60 who contracted COVID-19 have died that fatality rate rises to 8% for persons over 60.

Madam Speaker, in other words, the fatality rate for those infected with the novel coronavirus who are over 60 years old is 13 times higher the fatality rate of those under 60 years old.

Figure 1:
COVID Infections, Death and Hospitalisation by Age, Mar 2020 – Jun 5, 2021

Under 60	Total	DIED	Case Fatality Rate	Total: Moderately/ severely ill Critical (Including deaths)	Total (mod, sev, crit) % of total
Under 60 Years	38,464	241	0.6	765	2
60 Years & Older	9,212	733	8	796	8.6
Age Unknown	1,355	0	0	35	2.6
Total	49,031	974	2	1596	3.3

In addition, although the Jamaican cohort aged 60 and over constitutes no more than 14%¹ of Jamaica’s population, approximately one-half or 50% of all those who have had to be hospitalized because of COVID-19 are in the over-60 category.

The COVID restrictions exist to prevent exhausting the capacity of the health system. Given that 50% of the hospitalized are over-60, if we vaccinate this population the likelihood of the health system coming under stress reduces significantly.

Madam Speaker, this pandemic does not end in Jamaica until a large majority of persons in the over 60 population is vaccinated. It is in the public interest that this segment of the population that is vulnerable to COVID-19 is fully vaccinated.

This Government, through the SERVE Jamaica programme, is building on the CARE programme, to provide an incentive for those persons 60 and over to become fully vaccinated.

On March 9, 2021, during my speech before this Honourable House opening the 2021 Budget Debate I announced, the **Conditional Cash Transfer for the Vaccinated (CCTV) Programme** which will pay an incentive of **\$10,000** to persons 60 and over who have been **fully** vaccinated through the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Madam Speaker, as indicated in my opening budget speech and repeated just now – there is public interest in ensuring that our vulnerable older population is protected.

¹ STATIN estimates the over 60 population at 379,700 and Jamaica’s total population 2,735,400 (2019).

As of June 5, 2021:

One Hundred and Fifty-nine Thousand, Six Hundred and Fifteen (159,615) Jamaicans have received the first shot of the vaccine.

Forty-two Thousand, two Hundred and Fifty-four (42,254) of those were in the group aged 60 and over.

Of the Forty-Two Thousand elderly persons, Seven Thousand and Fifty-two (7,052) have received the second shot.

In other words, only 7,052 persons aged 60 and over are fully vaccinated.

Madam Speaker during my budget presentation I had indicated that the CCTV Grant would only be available to those senior citizens with an income of \$1.5M or less per annum. Today, Madam Speaker, I want to first announce that that provision has been removed and this grant is open to all citizens over the age of 60 who have been vaccinated through the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

Madam Speaker, now that the Ministry of Health and Wellness has begun administering the second vaccination, I am pleased to advise today the arrangements for the CCTV programme.

The programme will be administered, digitally, using the CARE platform. Persons 60 and over and who are fully vaccinated as evidenced by the records of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, are welcome to apply for the CCTV Grant starting July 15, 2021.

To apply, persons aged 60 and over will need to log onto the wecare platform at www.wecare.gov.jm and provide along with their first and last names, their:

1. TRN and/or their government issued Identification
2. Date of Birth
3. Mobile Telephone Number (to which they have access)
4. Email address
5. Vaccination Type and Batch numbers.
6. Preferred method of payment – commercial bank account or remittance agency. For those persons selecting bank accounts it is essential that the bank account selected is in the same name as the name inputted into the online application form and the vaccination card and that the account is active.

On application, persons will be assigned a unique reference number. This number is to be used to track the progress of their application, respond to any queries from applicants and for those applicants selecting a remittance company - to collect the grant once all validation is completed. As a reminder Madam Speaker, the WeCare website can be accessed via computer, tablet, or smartphone. The website is zero-rated and does not require a data plan or credit to log onto.

Collection of Grant

Madam Speaker, all applicants will be communicated with primarily through SMS Text messages and/or email and will be advised once their application has been validated and approved. There are two modalities for payment of the grant:

1. Through a valid commercial bank account – Applicants choosing this methodology must ensure that the name on the bank account chosen must be the same as the name on the electronic application form and on the vaccination card received from the Ministry of Health and that the account is not a dormant one.
2. Through a recognized remittance company - Applicants choosing to collect their funds from the remittance company must ensure that they have a valid government issued identification and their reference number received on completion of their application on the wecare system.

For those applicants who are physically unable to get to the remittance company, third party collection will be accommodated. The third party must have in their possession at the time of collection:

- A signed letter of authorization stamped by a Justice of the Peace.
- The valid government issued identification of the applicant.
- Their valid government identification.

Customer service queries will be handled by the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service's customer care team which can be contacted at 1-888-4WE-CARE – 1-888-493-2273.

Madam Speaker, as with the CARE Programme, the Auditor General's Department will be asked to conduct concurrent audits. That is, to audit while the CCTV programme is being executed and BEFORE each batch of payments is made.

The Auditor General will have access to the system and all of its data and will be able to audit the eligibility, validation and other processes and produce their reports. These reports will be tabled in Parliament. We know from the experience with the CARE programme that this could slow down the actual payments however, the continued transparency and openness of the programme to the highest levels of scrutiny, will continue to provide public confidence in a fair and even-handed process.

EXTENDED SET AND BEST CASH GRANTS

Madam Speaker, as this Honourable House is aware the SET Cash Grant which provides unemployment support grants for those persons who earned at or below the income tax threshold and have been unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic from all sectors and the BEST Cash grant that supports tourism employment were renewed with respect to the period April – June 2021. **\$3 billion was set aside in the budget for this.**

The period for new applications for these two components will close on June 13, 2021 and advertisements to this effect have been in the public domain for the past few weeks. All existing applicants who were already in receipt of payments under the SET and BEST Cash will not need to reapply for the period April – June 2021 and will qualify for an

\$18,000.00 monthly payment if ruled eligible in keeping with the originally defined criteria.

We have approximately 40,000 existing SET Cash beneficiaries and approximately 15,000 BEST Cash beneficiaries.

We expect payments to all applicants (new and existing) for the months of April and May to commence in the latter part of June, 2021.

So Madam Speaker, under the SERVE Jamaica Programme we expect approximately 55,000 Jamaicans to be in receipt of SET Cash and BEST Cash grants of \$18,000 per month in respect of April – June 2021 which will be paid in the months of June, July and August of 2021. We expect this to cost in the region of \$3 billion.

The final numbers will depend on meeting the qualifying criteria in April, May and June, that is – not be on a payroll, evidence of being employed prior to March 2020 where income was less than 1.5 million and other criteria as previously advertised.

CLOSING

The Government continues to provide economic and social support in the face of the pandemic.

We are in the midst of an economic recovery, the PIOJ has projected growth of at least 7% in this quarter ending June 30, and there is every indication that this will be realized.

What is critically important at this stage, is that Jamaica's vaccination programme is successful, so that we can look to the future with confidence.